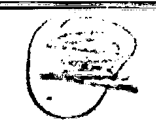
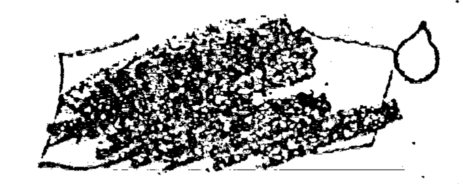
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MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence

THRU : Deputy Director (Intelligence)

SUBJECT : Flying Saucers

1. PROBLEM

To determine:

a. Whether there are national security implications in the problem of "unidentified flying objects" i.e. flying saucers;

b. Whether adequate study and research is currently being directed to this problem in its relation to such national security implications; and

c. What further investigation and research should be instituted, by whom, and under what aegis.

2. FACTS BEARING ON THE PROBLEM

a. OSI has investigated the work currently being performed on flying saucers and has found that:

(1) The only unit of Government currently studying the problem is the Directorate of Intelligence, USAF, which has charged the Air Technical Intelligence Center (ATIC) with responsibility for investigating the reports of sightings.

(2) At ATIC there is a small group consisting of a reserve Captain, two Lieutenants and two secretaries to which come all reports of sightings through official channels, and which conducts investigation of the reports either itself or through consultation with other Air Force officers or with civilian technical consultants.

(3) A world-wide reporting system has been instituted and major Air Force Bases have been ordered to make interceptions of unidentified flying objects.

(4) The research being carried on is strictly on a case basis and appears to be designed solely to attempt a satisfactory explanation of each individual sighting as it occurs.

(5) ATIC has concluded an arrangement with Battelle Memorial Institute for the latter to establish a machine indexing system for official reports of sightings.

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(6) Since 1947, ATIC has received approximately 1500 official reports of sightings plus an enormous volume of letters, phone calls and press reports. During the month of July 1952 alone, official reports totaled 250. Of the 1500 reports, Air Force carries 20% as unexplained and of those received January through July 1952 it carries 28% unexplained.

3. DISCUSSION

a. OSI entered into its inquiry fully aware that it was coming into a field already charged with partisanship, one in which objectivity had been overridden by numerous sensational writers, and one in which there are pressures for extravagant explanations as well as for oversimplification. The OSI Team consulted with a representative of Air Force Special Studies Group; discussed the problem with those in charge of the Air Force Project at Wright Field; reviewed a considerable volume of intelligence reports; checked the Soviet press and broadcast indices; and conferred with three OSI consultants, all leaders in their scientific fields, who were chosen because of their broad knowledge of the technical areas concerned.

b. OSI found that the ATIC study is probably valid if the purpose is limited to a case-by-case explanation. However, the study makes no attempt to solve the more fundamental aspect of the problem which is to determine definitely the nature of the various phenomena which are causing these sightings, or to discover means by which these causes and their visual or electronic effects may be immediately identified. Our consultant panel stated that these solutions would probably be found on the margins or just beyond the frontiers of our present knowledge in the fields of atmospheric, ionospheric, and extraterrestrial phenomena, with the added possibility that our present dispersal of nuclear waste products might also be a factor. They recommended that a study group be formed to perform three functions:

(1) Analyze and systematize the factors of information which form the fundamental problem;

(2) Determine the fields of fundamental science which must be investigated in order to reach an understanding of the phenomena involved; and

(3) Make recommendations for the initiation of appropriate research.

Dr. Julius A. Stratton, Vice President of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, has indicated to OSI that such a group could be constituted at that Institute. Similarly, Project Lincoln, the Air Force air defense project at MIT, could be charged with these responsibilities.





4. CONCLUSIONS

a. The flying saucer situation contains two elements of danger which, in a situation of international tension, have national security implications. These are:

(1) Psychological - With world-wide sightings reported, it was found that, up to the time of our investigation, there had been in the Russian press no report or comment, even satirical, on flying saucers, though Andre Gromyko had made one humorous mention of the subject. With a State-controlled press, this could result only from an official policy decision. The question, therefore, arises as to whether or not these sightings:

(a) Could be controlled,

(b) Could be predicted, and

(c) Could be used from a psychological warfare point of view either offensively or defensively.

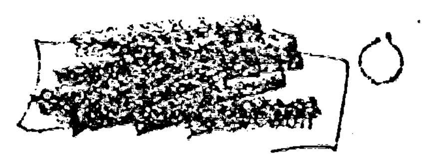
The public concern with the phenomena, which is reflected in the United States press and in pressure of inquiry upon the Air Force, indicates that there is a fair proportion of our population which is mentally conditioned to the acceptance of the incredible. In this fact lies the potential for the touching-off of mass hysteria and panic.

(2) Air Vulnerability - The United States Air Warning System will undoubtedly always depend upon a combination of radar screening and visual observation. We give Russia the present capability of delivering an air attack against us, yet at any given moment now, there may be current a dozen official unidentified sightings plus many unofficial. At any moment of attack, we are now in a position where we cannot, on an instant basis, distinguish hardware from phantom, and as tension mounts we will run the increasing risk of false alerts and the even greater danger of falsely identifying the real as phantom.

b. Both of these problems are primarily operational in nature but each contains readily apparent intelligence factors. From an operational point of view, three actions are required:

(1) Immediate steps should be taken to improve identification of both visual and electronic phantom so that in the event of an attack, instant and positive identification of enemy planes or missiles can be made.

[redacted]



(2) A study should be instituted to determine what, if any, utilization could be made of these phenomena by United States psychological warfare planners, and what, if any, defenses should be planned in anticipation of Soviet attempts to utilize them.

(3) A national policy should be established as to what should be told the public regarding the phenomena, in order to minimize risk of panic.

c. Intelligence problems include:

(1) The present level of Russian knowledge regarding these phenomena.

(2) Possible Soviet intentions and capabilities to utilize these phenomena to the detriment of US security interests.

(3) The reasons for silence in the Soviet Press regarding flying saucers.

d. Intelligence responsibilities in this field as regards both collection and analysis can be discharged with maximum effectiveness only after much more is known regarding the exact nature of these phenomena.

e. The problem transcends the level of individual departmental responsibilities, and is of such importance as to merit cognizance and action by the National Security Council.

f. Additional research, differing in character and emphasis from that presently being performed by Air Force, will be required to meet the specific needs of both operations and intelligence.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that:

a. The Director of Central Intelligence advise the National Security Council of the security implications inherent in the flying saucer problem with the request that, under his statutory coordinating authority, the Director of Central Intelligence be empowered to initiate through the appropriate agencies, either within or without the government, the investigation and research necessary to solve the problem of instant positive identification of "unidentified flying objects"

b. CIA, under its assigned responsibilities, and in cooperation with the Psychological Strategy Board, immediately investigate possible offensive or defensive utilization of the phenomena for psychological warfare purposes both for and against the United States, advising those agencies charged with U. S. internal security of any pertinent





findings affecting their areas of responsibility.

c. On the basis of these programs of research, CIA develop and recommend for adoption by the National Security Council a policy of public information which will minimize the risk of panic.

H. MARSHALL CHADWELL
Assistant Director
Scientific Intelligence

OSI/FCStrong:bmd (11 September 1952)

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1 - AD/SI
1 - Daily Reading
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These are not [illegible] to us

